



Prescription Validity

This document has been adapted, with permission, from the “General Pharmacy Practice Questions” FAQs section of the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board website¹.

New prescriptions or requests for refills when a prescriber passes away, retires or otherwise ceases practice?

Historically, it has been Council’s position that since the prescriber-patient relationship no longer exists and the patient is no longer under the practitioner’s care, the prescription should be no longer considered valid. However, this is not always practical in today’s world since it can often take an extended period of time for a patient to obtain the services of another primary health care provider. In many cases, a prescriber will intentionally write prescriptions for a period of time that extends beyond his or her retirement to specifically cover off such situations.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan’s position is that as long as the prescriber was licensed at the time the prescription was written, it is considered a legally valid prescription. As such, as long as the prescription is not more than a year old, it would still be considered a legal prescription. **The real question in this instance is whether filling or re-filling the prescription is appropriate – which needs to be assessed on case-by-case basis.**

Therefore, Council has approved that pharmacists who receive such requests understand it is their professional responsibility to evaluate the appropriateness of the prescription in each individual situation and consider questions related to patient assessment and the patient’s best interests. Questions to consider include, but are not limited to:

- How long ago was the prescription written? Was it intended to be a short-term therapy?
- Is the medication for a condition that is considered to be chronic or long term? If so, does the patient have an established stable, compliant history with the medication?
- Is the patient unable to visit a new primary health care provider in a timely manner?
- Is the patient at an increased risk of harm by filling or re-filling the medication? (Or conversely, is the patient at an increased risk of harm if the medication is not provided in accordance with the original prescription?)
- If the prescriber was still practicing, would I have consulted with the prescriber for any reason before filling or refilling the medication?
- Is there another option? Would providing an interim supply or prescription extension, be appropriate, if indicated?

¹ <http://www.nlpb.ca/pharmacy-practice/frequently-asked-questions/>



Regardless of the pharmacist's decision, the patient should be advised to find a new or interim prescriber as soon as possible. The pharmacist must make a record of the decision documenting the rationale for the final decision.